

Facing the Real Issue in Today's Church...

*Shared on Facebook by a dear brother, Pastor Chris Knight, Listie GBC
(of Listie, PA, Somerset County)*

Shared by a friend...painfully true! Worth the read! Lord help us!

I'd be lying if I said the universal lack of church attendance doesn't bother me at all. There seems to be an apathy for anything spiritual even among our churches. Oh, I know the church has been incorporating all sorts of other things into its ministry to keep the numbers up and hide the truth. We have upward sports, Christian motorcycle groups, prayer breakfasts, wild game feast and a whole host of other attractions that all still draw crowds. But compare these with the plain old prayer meeting, church wide Bible study, and the now antique Sunday night services of our grandparents. Attendance suffers when our hobbies, sports, and interests are stripped away. Now I'm not against motorcycles, biscuits and gravy, kids' sports, or even a rattlesnake taco. However, I do think they have become the draw while the spiritual aspects of our meetings are simply being endured.

That leads me to my real concern—this is the thing that really bothers me. If the church continues to use secular interests to draw people to its spiritual meetings, they run the risk of training an entire generation of church folks to depend on secular interests to grow and maintain a church. Oh wait, we've already done that. I can't count the times that I've been asked *"What does this church have to offer my kids?"* Or *"What's the church going to do to attract new people?"* Let's not forget the catch-all: *"Pastor, when is our church going to _____ like all the other churches?"* These questions float around churches every time two or three are gathered in His name.

We have a generation of churchgoers who have never been taught to preach, pray, and persevere. They've never spent a night in prayer with a list of names of lost people who need to repent and believe the gospel. They've never personally shared their faith in Christ with a lost soul. They've never

passed out a gospel tract. They've never intentionally befriended someone to share the gospel with them. They don't know five missionaries by name. Their prayer list only contains sick people. They've invited people to church, but never to Christ. They have programs and a paid staff to handle all these things. So *"Hey, come to our event and meet our pastor!"* is the sum total of modern evangelism.

We need to wake up to our real condition. Yes, the attendance in most churches is at an all-time low. But the real problem is trying to use the same thing that put us in this situation as our solution to fix it. Churches will not overcome this problem by having another youth car wash, selling more Bible verse tee-shirts, or slapping another bumper sticker on their car. Churches must impress their members with the responsibility to personally engage the people around them with the gospel. We must acquaint ourselves with missionaries and support them personally. We must take responsibility to live holy and faithful lives that testify to our faith. The solution is not a revamped pastor-led program. We need a whole-church approach to ministry. When Christians talk like, act like, and look like a biblical Christian, the world takes notice of them. We are not of this world!

I guess the purpose of this post is to call for church members to pursue sanctification again. Sanctification is our spiritual growth, it's the process of becoming more Christlike. In John 17 we have Christ's prayer for us. In verse 17 He prays *"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."* This sanctification comes from our understanding of Scripture. When churches are constantly minimizing the Scriptures and maximizing the secular, sanctification suffers. When Christians fail to live as Christ, the testimony of the church suffers. The church soon looks like the world.

If you too are troubled by the trajectory of today's churches, take personal responsibility. Live holy. Love others. Attend faithfully. Study the Scriptures. Share the gospel. Pray for the grace of God to be shed abroad in our communities. Lord, let it start with me.

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